

**RESTORATION INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM  
FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES (FUDS)  
PROJECT FACT SHEET  
23 JANUARY 1998  
TAG REVIEW DATE: 11 MARCH 1998**

**1. SITE NAME:** Fort Dearborn

**SITE NUMBER:** D01NH030500

**LOCATION:**

City: Rye  
County: Rockingham  
State: New Hampshire

**PROJECT NUMBER:** D01NH030503

**CATEGORY:** OE

**INPR RAC:** 2

**ASR RAC:** 5

**TAG RAC:** 2

**2. POC'S:**

**GEOGRAPHIC DISTRICT:**

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**ASR SUPPORT DISTRICT:**

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**3. SITE DESCRIPTION:** The former coastal artillery installation is located in the Town of Rye, which is southeast of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The site, consisting of 267.46 acres, is located along US Highway 1A. Prior to DOD acquiring the land, it was

residential property. Today all of the land east of Route 1A is Odiorne Point State Park. Those lands west of the road are state owned with the exception of about 40 acres of salt marsh which belongs to the Town of Rye and about nine (9) acres which remain in private ownership.

The majority of the site is currently owned by the State of New Hampshire and used as a State Park complete with walking trails and picnic grounds. The Seacoast Science Center leases a building in the park that provides seasonal environmental educational programs and informative events for the general public. Each year over 120,000 people come to the Seacoast Science Center which is managed by the Audubon Society of New Hampshire under contract with the State of New Hampshire. The portion of land that contains the former ammunition storage building is on private land with plans to be incorporated into the State owned area in the future.

**4. SITE HISTORY:** The history of ordnance in the vicinity of Rye Harbor predates the actual history of Fort Dearborn itself. Every summer (c.1920), the 197th Coast Artillery Regiment, New Hampshire National Guard, brought its batteries together at Rye Harbor for two weeks of intensive training. Guardsmen fired day and night target practices at cloth sleeves towed by planes over the ocean.

The construction of the batteries that would eventually become Fort Dearborn was a direct result of the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard was vulnerable to attack and Odiorne Point served as a valuable addition to the Portsmouth Harbor Defense system.

In its report of 27 July 1940, the Harbor Defense Board recommended that the 16" Naval gun be adopted as the standard long-range gun and the 6" gun as the standard medium range gun for coastal defense. With the expansion of Portsmouth Harbor in World War II. Odiorne's Point became Battery F (Frost Point would become Battery C), equipped with Panama Mounts for the four 155mm GPF guns. These guns served as the intermediate range guns until the new 6" battery was brought into service in 1944. These guns were the only mobile defenses in the Portsmouth Harbor Defense system during World War II. Two small ammunition magazines were constructed near the 155mm guns.

By General Order #25, dated 21 May 1943, the War Department designated the new fortification Fort Dearborn. Additional military structures included Battery 103 which was known as Battery Seaman and Battery 204. Battery 103 consisted of two 16"

guns. On 21 June 1944, the soldiers from Battery C test fired the 16" guns for their first and only time. Battery 204 consisted of two 6" guns.

By V-J Day, the 22d Coast Artillery was disbanded. Fort Dearborn was transferred to the Navy Department and served a few years for security. The 16" and 6" guns were scrapped, and all military equipment was removed. The Navy assisted in dismantling and removing the mines which had been laid along the harbor entrance. The ocean half of Dearborn was retained for military use for another ten years, but the inland portion to the west of Ocean Boulevard was placed on sale. By means of sealed bid, the Odiorne homestead property was purchased in 1949 by Ralph Brown. Former military structures on Mr. Brown's property included an ammunition storage building and an infiltration training course. A unit from the New Hampshire National Guard occupied the Frost Point section in 1949-1950. In 1955, 45.27 acres of Fort Dearborn became the Rye Air Force Station and was transferred to the Department of the Air Force. A unit from the Air Defense Command used the property to conduct radar training. The contiguous properties known as the Fort Dearborn Military Reservation and the Rye Air Force Station were reported to GSA as excess property in two separate reports: the former on 3 September 1958 and the latter on 16 April 1959. Documentation states, "The property has not been contaminated by live bombs, artillery projectiles, chemical warfare, radioactive material or any other substance". In regards specifically to the Air Force Station, "the property was not contaminated, and a certificate of decontamination is not required".

On 1 June 1959, the Corps of Engineers requested the withdrawal from surplus and excess of 72.67 acres of Fort Dearborn for use by the Pease Air Force Base as a small arms rifle range. This request was denied as being for a purpose inconsistent with the economic objectives of the federal property.

The property was sold to the State of New Hampshire in 1961 and became Odiorne State Park.

## **5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

### **Area:**

Size Acres:	267.48
Former Use:	Coastal Defense
Present Use:	State Park, Seacoast Science Center, private land

Probable End Use: State Park, Seacoast Science Center  
Ordnance Presence: Potential  
Type: Large Caliber munitions, Grenades, TNT

**6. CURRENT STATUS:** This Draft Archives Search Report (ASR) was completed by St. Louis District in July 1997.

**7. STRATEGY:** ESI

**8. ISSUES AND CONCERNS:** This ASR was reviewed by the Huntsville Center Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on 11 March 1998. The TAG decided that an ESI should be performed on the swampy area to see if present conditions could justify changing this site to a RAC 5 NOFA.

The ASR recommends RAC 5 NOFA but HNC Safety does not concur. HNC Safety Form 7 comments dated 24 Sep 97, state, "Do not concur with the RAC score of 5 (NOFA). The area was extensively used before the presence of the Ft. Dearborn as a training area for coastal artillery batteries, the Marines use the point to practice beach landings, and grenades/small arms have been found on site. Large caliber ammunition was stored and fired on site as well as a large quantity of TNT to fill mines (1400 fifty pound blocks). What was the disposition of this OE upon closure of the site, and during normal disposal of unserviceable ammunition. The POTENTIAL for OE contamination exists both off and on shore. Recommend a RAC 2 as rated in 1996 by David Arson (CENED-PL-F) with further action by CEHNC."

The answer to HNC Safety's Form 7 comments by St. Louis are: "While grenades have been found on this site. They are not believed to have been used there. They are thought to have washed up on the site as other ordnance is often washed up on all lands surrounding the harbor. It is assumed that all ordnance and explosives was transferred with the guns or in similar fashion. The location of the TNT storage does not lend itself to burial in swamp. Building and road only high ground. Contamination off shore obviously exists but not subject of this report. If grenades are included RAC 2 results. If this is the intent provide changed RAC form and so indicate on fact sheet."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported that the only federally-listed species occurring in the vicinity of Fort Dearborn are the occasional transient bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). The New Hampshire Natural Heritage Inventory reported the occurrence of two state-threatened plants within Fort Dearborn. The species are salt-marsh gerardia (*Agalinis maritima*), and dwarf glasswort

(*Salicornia bigelovii*). No additional information on the occurrence of rare or endangered species or natural communities is known at this time. This does not mean that other state or federally-listed species may not be present within the areas of interest. An on-site inspection by the appropriate federal and state personnel may be necessary to verify the presence, absence or location of listed species, or natural communities.

**9. SCHEDULE SUMMARY: ESI**

**10. FUNDING/BUDGET SUMMARY: For Official Use Only**